Community Contact

Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs

January/
February
2011

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Drive Safely on Manitoba's Winter Roads

More than 2,200 kilometres of frozen roads are prepared in just a few weeks to serve about 30,000 Manitobans in 23 remote communities for a period that lasts about eight to 12 weeks.

Manitoba

This Issue

Welcome to the January/ February *Community Contact* newsletter.

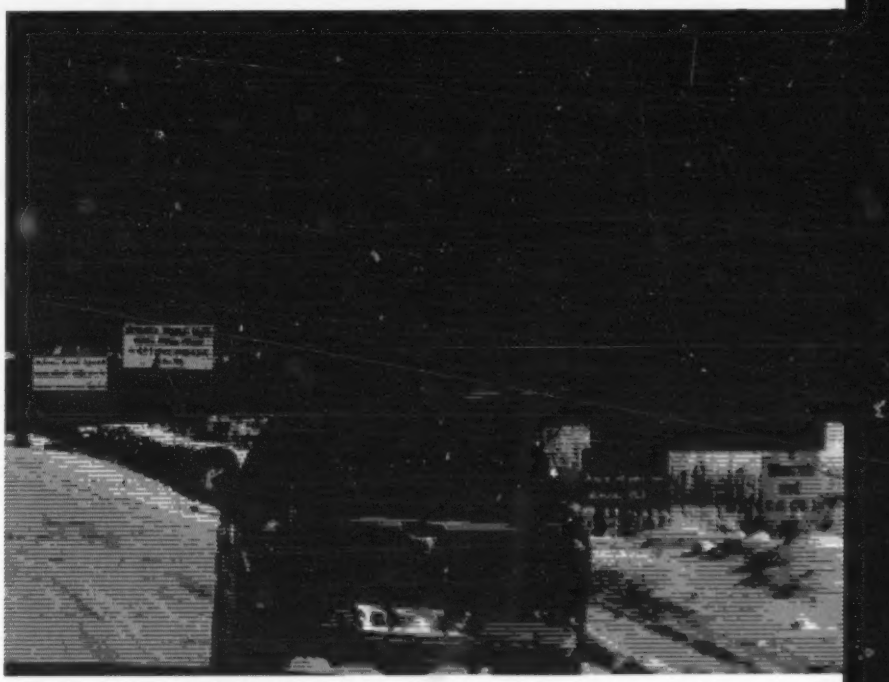
We start the newsletter by wishing everyone all the best in the New Year. Although cold weather is not always wanted, it is appreciated in northern Manitoba for the start of the winter road season. With January and February often the coldest months of the year, it is also the time when winter roads are constructed to Manitoba's remote communities. People who travel on winter roads need to know what has changed from the previous years and how to use the roads safely. To help with this, we provide two articles on the Manitoba winter road system.

We continue the issue with an article that focuses on community emergency planning. With all the wet weather that Manitoba received over the past year, it is anticipated that there will be flooding in many areas of the province this spring. Flooding does not only occur near rivers and lakes. Overland flooding caused by plugged culverts and high soil moisture will also be a concern. The information provided in this newsletter will help communities to plan and prepare for any flooding that may occur. Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) will be helping communities prepare for spring flooding, but it is up to each community to have an up-to-date emergency plan to follow if needed.

Along with these articles we profile five new ANA employees who are working with communities in various occupations. Closing out this issue are the municipal calendar reminders for the months of February and March 2011.

Enjoy this issue and please feel free to contact us with your comments, pictures or article suggestions, or to request additional copies.

Winter Roads Vital



It's important to read all the signs before you head down a winter road. They are vital links for remote communities, but travelling on them can quickly turn nasty for anyone not properly prepared.

As each New Year begins, Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT) works with Aboriginal communities across remote and northerly regions of the province to complete the annual winter road system. Many Manitobans do not realize the cold weather that ends summer road construction across most of the province also prompts activity in northern communities to prepare the eagerly awaited temporary winter road system.

While more than 2,200 kilometres of roads are prepared in just a few weeks, about 30,000 Manitobans in the 23 remote communities served by the seasonal network watch the progress with great anticipation. For the typical eight to 12 weeks the road system is open, it becomes a vital social and economic link for these northern residents. Stretching across natural terrain features such as muskeg, lakes, rivers and creeks, the road system is a brief transportation alternative for remote communities lacking year round road access.

Provincial winter roads are constructed and maintained mostly by local communities or joint venture companies creating local jobs and providing construction training opportunities. The annual budget for this important

Links for Remote Communities

seasonal project, which is shared between federal and provincial governments, has tripled since 1999 and will be about $9 million for 2011.

Construction starts with lightweight equipment used to pack the first snowfalls across land and ice portions of the routes. This allows the frost to penetrate deeper into the ground and the ice to thicken, creating stronger foundations.

As the ground hardens and the ice thickens to safe levels, heavy graders and snowplows are used to scrape away excess snow, leaving just enough to keep the roadway reflective, so that heat from the sun will not be absorbed and soften the surface. On lake or river crossings, the surfaces are plowed to allow the ice to form naturally. River crossings are flooded, if needed, to ensure ice thickness. The ice must be able to support loads of up to 37,500 kilograms moving at a maximum of 15 kilometres per hour with vehicles spaced at least one kilometre apart.

Winter roads are made of ice and snow. They are almost always unpredictable, and there is no room for error, especially when facing traffic coming from the other direction. Drivers who take it slow and easy are most likely to get there safely.

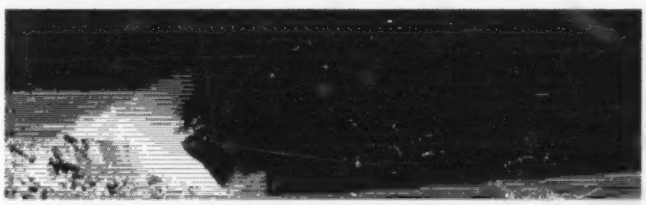
Because of the seasonal nature of the Manitoba's winter road system, there is a strong focus on safety at every stage. MIT starts with pre-season meetings with truckers to acquaint them with the prevailing conditions and the precautions they need to take. Contractors are required to meet specific safety standards to protect their staff during the construction and maintenance phases. Weather permitting, inspectors regularly check all sections of the winter road system to ensure it is safe for travel.

Since 2001, government has invested approximately $11 million in realigning more than 25 per cent, or about 600 kilometres, of the system, moving it away from lakes, rivers and creeks onto land to improve safety, reduce environmental risks and promote sustainability. Over this period, the system has also had $15.6 million invested in bridge improvements such as realignment work and replacement of the Gods Lake Narrows Bridge.

This winter, the East Side Road Authority, an agency created by the Manitoba government to work with First Nations communities, is set to begin replacing parts of the winter road network with all-season roads. Because new roads will often follow the routes of existing winter roads, activity on and near winter roadways will increase. Travellers are reminded to exercise caution at all times while using the winter road network, especially when passing construction workers and equipment.

Until such time as the entire system has been replaced by all-season roads, constructing and maintaining Manitoba's winter roads will continue to play a vital role in the social and economic development of remote and northern communities. Each year as the temperatures begin to drop, MIT, local contractors and northern communities start the planning process anew. They begin by discussing the various challenges of rising costs, climate change, environmental concerns and other factors that must be addressed to deliver the next successful winter road season.

For more information about travelling safely on Manitoba's winter road system, visit the MIT website at gov.mb.ca/mit/winter/index.html or visit eastsideroadauthority.mb.ca.



Ice road maintenance is a balancing act. A snowplow clears the roadway to keep it exposed to freezing air, but leaves enough snow behind to reflect heat from the sun. This keeps road surfaces solid and ice thick to support heavy cargo.

Winter Road Safety Tips

Winter road systems in Manitoba are temporary routes to remote northern communities. In many respects, they are lifelines for northern residents. Used for short periods each winter, they allow people in isolated communities to buy fuel, building materials and food supplies they need to last an entire year.

Winter roads rely on cold weather. A few degrees on the thermometer can mean the difference between a safe trip and one that ends in disaster. Here are some important safety tips to consider before heading out on a winter road:

Drive safe

Know the road conditions and ensure your vehicle is in shape to handle the rough conditions you will find on a winter road. Be prepared for wild animals that may cross the roads at any time and use caution when approaching blind curves, hills and oncoming vehicles. Never park a vehicle or store shipped goods on the ice because constant weight will weaken ice. Commercial truck traffic crossing the ice in the same direction should always keep at least a kilometre between the vehicles to avoid overloading the ice or causing dangerous waves underneath it.

Be polite

Use your lights at all times and slow down when passing other vehicles to avoid blowing snow that may blind other drivers. If you see someone in trouble, do what you can to help them because their lives may depend on it.

Slow down

Seasoned winter road drivers limit their speed on the ice to 15 kilometres per hour. Fast moving vehicles cause waves under the ice, which may break the ice when they hit the shore or meet a wave from an approaching vehicle.
Ice cracks or open water demand extreme caution. You may be putting yourself at great risk if you do not slow down or stop. If you break through the ice, you must have an escape plan and be ready to use it quickly.

Prepare

To ensure you arrive safely at your destination, prepare for the worst so you will have the best chance of surviving should you encounter serious trouble. Remember that a minor problem can quickly become a huge or even fatal one in a remote wilderness. If this is your first winter road trip, be sure to drive with someone who has winter road experience.

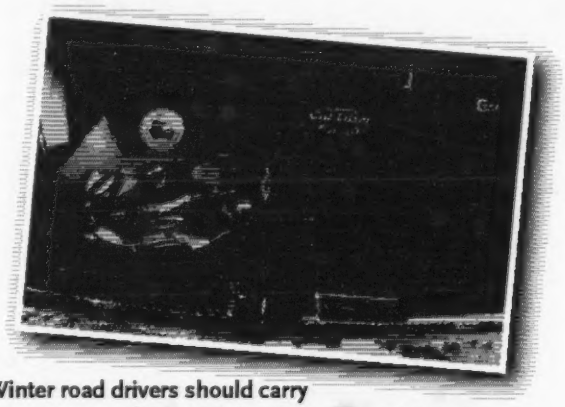
Conditions can change at any time. Make sure you are ready and have emergency supplies in your vehicle. Pack winter survival equipment such as:

- blankets, parka, mitts, tuque, boots, sunglasses and an extra set of clothing
- basic camping equipment including matches, candles, axe, flashlight and toilet paper
- emergency food supplies, granola bars, water, nuts and chocolate
- tools for vehicle repairs, booster cables, jack, tow rope, shovel and gas line antifreeze
- an emergency radio, a locator beacon or a satellite phone

Stick to a plan

Tell someone your route and ask them to call for help if you don't arrive at your destination within a reasonable time. Remember the most important rule of winter road travel is: **Do not** travel on a closed winter road. If you do, you are certain to find out why it is closed, and it may not be a pleasant experience. Winter roads are closed when they become unsafe to use. There are no inspections or regular maintenance on closed roads and help will be a long time coming if you get stuck or stranded.

For current road conditions, call the 24-hour highways information line at 1-877-627-6237 or visit manitoba.ca/mit/winter/index.html.



Winter road drivers should carry an emergency kit containing items like a tow rope, a battery booster with air compressor, a first aid kit, a blanket, car repair tools, a collapsible shovel and traction grit. Warm boots, extra clothes, emergency food and water are also well-advised.

Profile

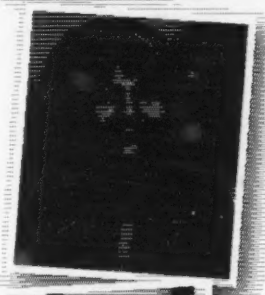
Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) Local Government Development Division introduces five new employees.

Amber Johnson

Amber joins ANA as the new administrative assistant with the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative. She works at the ANA office on 1680 Ellice Avenue in Winnipeg.

Though she grew up primarily in Winnipeg, Amber also lived in both The Pas and Thompson during her childhood years. In 2008, Amber graduated from the University of Manitoba with a bachelor degree in Recreation Management and Community Development. She looks forward to putting what she learned to work with the Northern Healthy Foods Initiative.

Before joining ANA, Amber worked for Manitoba's Sport Secretariat as a consultant. A passion for health promotion, community development and a love for taking on new challenges will drive Amber in her new role with ANA.



Leah Garson

Leah is a new municipal development consultant with the ANA northern region office in Thompson. She works with community councils, providing financial and administrative advice.

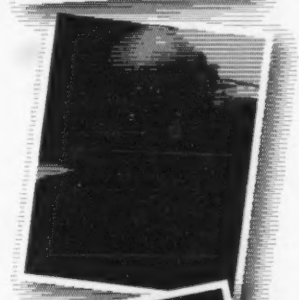
Leah graduated from Kwantlen University College located in Surrey, British Columbia in 1997 with a degree in Criminology/Psychology. Her work experience includes seven years with the federal government and five years working for various Manitoba First Nations on projects ranging from financial management to strategic planning.

A resident of Thompson since 2006, Leah thoroughly enjoys the opportunity to work with communities in the ANA northern region.

Leonard Martin

Leonard is also a municipal development consultant based in the ANA northern region Thompson office. He joined ANA after serving as band administrator, education manager and economic development officer for the Mosakahiken Cree Nation. Leonard has also worked with the University of Manitoba as a program director and at Keewatin Community College as an ecotourism co-ordinator.

Leonard graduated from The University of Winnipeg with a bachelor of arts and from Red River College with a diploma in Business Administration. Because he has lived and worked in northern Manitoba, Leonard understands many of the issues people in northern communities deal with every day.



Nelson Weir

Nelson is the new manager of engineering and technical services stationed in the ANA northern region Thompson office. Born in North Sidney, Nova Scotia and raised in the small mining village of Little Narrows in the Bras d'Or Lakes region of the province, Nelson lived and worked in various communities throughout eastern Canada before arriving in Thompson in 2010.

Nelson graduated from Dalhousie University in 1977 with a degree in Civil Engineering. He spent several years working for various consulting engineering firms and two major construction companies before establishing his own engineering consulting firm in the Cape Breton area.

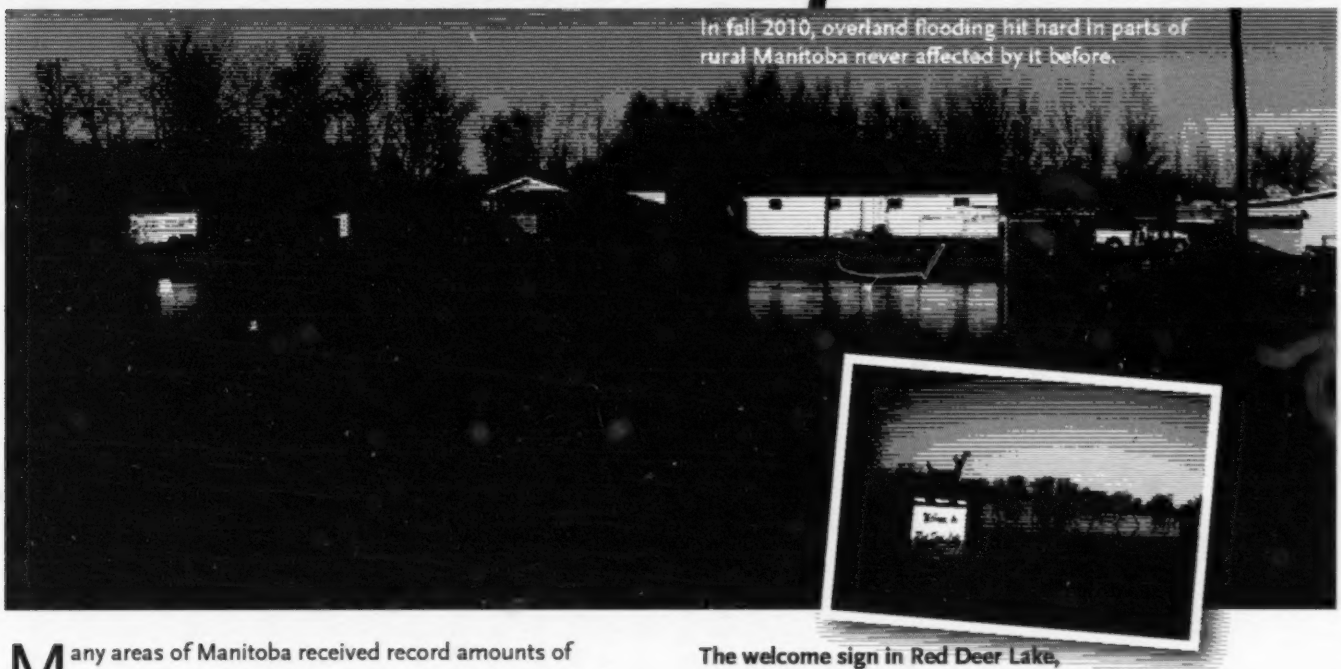
Nelson has already traveled to many of the communities in the northern region and looks forward to continued contributions as a member of the ANA team.

Hilda Storey

Hilda is the new administrative assistant for the ANA northern region office in Thompson. Originally from Fox Lake Cree Nation, Hilda has lived a majority of her life in the north. Her career experience includes working with the Manitoba and Alberta governments and several Aboriginal organizations in a variety of capacities.

Hilda graduated from Assiniboine Community College in Brandon with a certificate in Business Accountancy. She enjoys the outdoors, walking, meeting new people and looking at life with a sense of humour.

2011 Flood Preparation



In fall 2010, overland flooding hit hard in parts of rural Manitoba never affected by it before.

Many areas of Manitoba received record amounts of precipitation in 2010. We experienced flooding in the spring, but also in summer and fall, when flooding doesn't normally happen. The effects of all the precipitation can still be seen in the lakes, rivers, streams and ditches throughout the province. How will all this water affect spring flooding in 2011?

Recent reports indicate soil moisture levels and spring runoff potential are well above normal in the majority of the province. Manitoba Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) has started working with departments, municipalities and communities to ensure they update their emergency plans and are provided with the latest flood forecast information. Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) will be contacting all communities to ensure that their emergency plans are up to date and include flood and evacuation components.

In Canada, emergency preparedness philosophy expects that people understand what emergencies might affect them personally. It expects people to do what they can to be prepared for dealing with threats and protecting themselves. It expects individual homeowners to be the first to take the necessary action to protect their properties.

If the job is too big for them to take care of on their own, they can ask for help from their community. If community resources become exhausted, the next level of support is the provincial government. If the provincial government requires help, it calls on the federal government. In Manitoba, the Emergency Measures Act requires that every community has an emergency plan in place to protect life, property and the environment to the best of their ability for the benefit of all.

The welcome sign in Red Deer Lake, Manitoba doubled as a community water gauge.

It's never too early to start planning

The way for communities to lessen the impact of flooding is through proper planning. Because nature is never easy to predict, it's not a good idea to put off planning. A flash flood may occur so suddenly that a community may not be able to respond, no matter how good its intentions.

A written flood plan should be completed well in advance to anticipate that flooding may happen unexpectedly. This year all it may take is some rain and a quick thaw. The flood plan recognizes possible major effects of a flood on the community and lists the resources and systems required to manage a flood if it happens. The plan will also identify what roles will be played by local government, provincial and federal governments, and what individual people can do to help during a flood.

The following will help your community prepare its flood response plans.

Are You Ready?

Possible major effects:

- threat to life and property
- power, water, gas, sewer and telephone utility outages
- groundwater well contamination
- transportation incidents that result in spills of dangerous materials
- severe structural damage or river bank erosion
- traffic disruption—stranded travellers, road, railway and bridge closures
- isolation of communities, homes, farms and livestock
- difficulties in attaining and delivering emergency services – fire, police and ambulance
- food and drinking water shortages
- evacuation of people and livestock
- damage to fields and crops
- threat to public health from water-borne disease

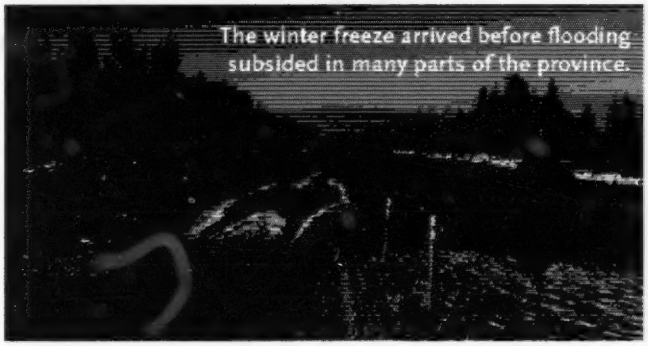
Resources

People in flood-threatened communities will need to know where to they will be able to rent, buy or arrange for use of equipment needed to battle a flood. Useful items may include:

sand and gravel	rain wear
shovels	work gloves
sandbags	boats, motors, canoes
lumber, plywood, hammers, nails	life jackets, paddles, flares
barricades	livestock trucks
pumps	buses
polyethylene sheeting	dump trucks
rope	pickup trucks
baling wire	front end loaders
floodlight equipment	bulldozers
walkie-talkies	backhoes
flashlights	portable toilets
spare batteries	portable heaters
generators	first aid kits
extension cords	drinking water
rubber boots	

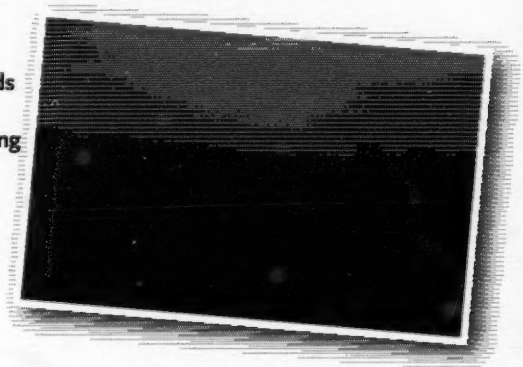
References and other sources of information

- Authorities – The Emergency Measures Act – is on the Internet at web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/e080e.php.



The winter freeze arrived before flooding subsided in many parts of the province.

- Aboriginal and Northern Affairs (ANA) communities can ask their regional representative or EMO for help with preparing an emergency management plan. An EMO regional map with contact information is at gov.mb.ca/emo/general/regional.html.
- To have a device installed in your community to measure water levels – ask your local Manitoba Water Stewardship office or ask your local ANA representative to contact Water Stewardship on your behalf.
- Spring flood forecasts are produced beginning in late winter of each year by Manitoba Water Stewardship. You can receive these reports by calling 204-945-6698, or email Phillip.Mutulu@gov.mb.ca and ask to join the email or fax distribution list.
- Incident Command System – most fire departments have this training, so your fire chief would be a local source. Incident command training can be obtained from the Manitoba Emergency Services College free at firecomm.gov.mb.ca/mesc_online_ics_reg.html.
- Emergency Operations System – training is by Manitoba EMO. For information contact your regional EMO representative listed at gov.mb.ca/emo/general/regional.html.



Inundated fields could not be cropped, making it hard to find feed for livestock.

Municipal Calendar Monthly Reminder for February and March 2011

February 2011

1 Deadline for receipt of any property tax payments to ANA to avoid penalties.

11 Submit resolution to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT) requesting grant-in-aid work on eligible grant-in-aid streets.

14 Analyze firefighter payments over $1,000 (from Jan. 1 to Dec. 31).

15 Deadline for receipt of payment to Receiver General to avoid penalty.

21 LOUIS RIEL DAY

25 Post tenders for garbage, custodial, water, etc. for the next fiscal year.

If applicable, submit T4s and Workers Compensation Board (WCB) annual return.

Event:

- Feb. 1 to 3: Northern region PWE workshop – Thompson.
- Feb. 6 to 9: MB Water and Wastewater Annual Conference – Portage la Prairie.
- Feb. 16 to 18: Recreation Connections Annual Provincial Conference – Winnipeg.

Community:

- Submit bi-weekly water samples and monthly sewer sample.
- Council to start preparation of capital project applications.
- Submit Municipal Employee Benefits Program (MEBP) form and payment no later than seven working days after the last pay period.
- If applicable:
  - Submit bi-weekly payrolls for Building Independence Program to regional office.
  - Request technical assistance for capital project applications by March 31.

WSH Reminders:

- Council to ensure fire extinguishers and first aid kits inspected.
- Council to act on items highlighted as corrective action from inspections.
- Are your training records up to date?

Departmental:

- Regional review of Community Management Plans (CMP).

March 2011

1 Deadline for receipt of property tax payments to department to avoid penalties.

13 Daylight savings time begins (clocks forward one hour). Ensure batteries in smoke/fire detectors in good working order.

15 Deadline for receipt of payment to Receiver General to avoid penalty.

Submit resolution to Manitoba Infrastructure and Transportation (MIT) requesting grant-in-aid work on eligible grant-in-aid streets.

18 Submit bill-backs to ANA for the fiscal year.

29 Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB) – complete inventory count requirement for year-end financial statement.

31 Submit community emergency plan, assessment roll revisions and year-end recreation report to department.

Request technical assistance for capital project applications.

Community:

- Submit bi-weekly water samples and monthly sewer sample.
- Review employee job descriptions.
- Pass new fiscal year resolutions (recurring bills, rentals, water, garbage, etc.).
- Ratify fire chief agreement and approve fire department member list.
- Award tenders posted in February.
- Submit MEBP form and payment no later than seven working days after the last pay period.
- If applicable, submit bi-weekly payrolls for Building Independence Program (BIP) to regional office.

WSH Reminders:

- Council to ensure fire extinguishers and first aid kits inspected.
- Council to act on items highlighted as corrective action from inspections.
- Unplanned inspection to be conducted by the department in community prior to month end.

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Community council members, community residents and department staff are encouraged to submit comments, questions, suggestions, article ideas and photographs to the editor.